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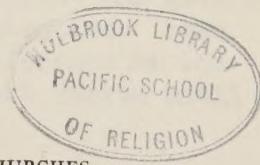
the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES

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the WORLD'S SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION



The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

No. 2

Fourteenth Year

January 17, 1947

Study Conference on the Authority and Significance of the Bible

The Conference on "The Authority and Significance of the Social and Political Message of the Bible Today", which was opened on January 5, 1947 at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva (see E.P.S. No. 1), came to an end on January 9, and may be said to have been a complete success. Not in the sense that resolutions or other concrete results are now to be expected, but in the sense that a definite step towards better mutual understanding and greater Christian unity has been ventured. For where is the unity of Christians to be sought, if not in the Bible? The questions with which the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam will have to deal in 1948 can only be solved on a Biblical basis: on this point all the participants at the Conference were agreed. The Bossey Conference must be regarded as one of a series of study conferences organised by the Study Department of the World Council of Churches, in preparation for the Assembly in 1948. During the summer of 1946 a Conference on the same subject was held in London, with delegates particularly from all the big Anglo-Saxon Churches; and in America special study groups are dealing with the subject in the light of their particular situation; at Bossey, on the other hand, the strongest delegations came from the Reformed and Lutheran Churches of Europe. We are glad to report that this meeting did not terminate in the same way as the famous conversation between Luther and Zwingli in Marburg. The Conference showed only too clearly that for a long time the confessions have not been close-cut entities but that the theological differences cut right across all the previous lines of division.

The participants at the Conference were agreed that the burning questions of the present day must be solved in the light of the Bible message, i.e. in the message of Jesus Christ. They were also agreed that it is impossible to apply the Biblicalist method, i.e. the method of bringing separate Biblical commandments to bear directly on the present situation, without consideration of their fundamental implications. But neither did they wish to confine themselves merely to proclaiming a basically Christian way of thinking, in the liberal, modernist fashion. Christ's lordship over the world must be preached to this world. It was on the question as to how this was to be done that opinions were divided. The Conference

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passed that one of the most burning questions of the present time is whether Luther's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms is applicable today (this point of view was represented especially by Professor Aalen-Oslo). Professor A. Nygren, who gave the Lutheran doctrine, finally succeeded in removing the bone of contention. Some working theses, mainly drawn up by him, were accepted by the Conference as the basis for further discussions. Unfortunately Karl Barth could not remain until the end of the Conference, as he had originally intended to do.

The Study Department of the World Council will bring out a detailed report on the Conference as soon as possible. The study conference was followed by a business committee in Geneva, consisting of representatives of the different countries. Important suggestions for future cooperation were accepted, especially in connection with the First Assembly.

E.P.S.Geneva

UNITED STATES

Niemöellers Thank Americans for Good Will

A message of thanks to American Christians for their "hearty welcome and good will" was released by Pastor Martin Niemöeller and Mrs. Niemoeller. The message said:

"Upon our arrival in the United States and ever since, we have been welcomed by thousands of fellow Christians wherever we have gone. Moreover, we have come to know that this hearty welcome has been due to the surprising fact that in all those places Christian brethren and sisters had gone on praying for us as for other persecuted people in Germany and Central Europe through all this long time of hardship and suffering. This experience has given us a new evidence of the real and deep-rooted unity of the one ecumenical Church of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Thus, we take this year's Christmas time as a special opportunity to thank God for His unspeakable gift and at the same time to thank the Christian people of America for this invaluable spiritual help - this spiritual help has become overflowing in every sort of succor which Christian brotherhood has granted to the needy and sorrow-stricken nations of Europe, including our own German people.

Your Churches, by their practical brotherhood, have become a great blessing to us and you have helped us in the hour of need by sending food, clothing, and medical supplies. In this way, you have helped in saving lives, and have testified to the spirit of Christian brotherhood and reconciliation.

May this blessing be brought back to you, your nation and your country, through the grace of God Who gave His Son, Jesus Christ, and by His sacrifice restored amongst men the spirit of brotherhood and charity and laid the foundations of genuine and lasting peace".

E.P.S.Geneva

UNITED STATES

United Church Approach to World's Needs

The combined efforts of Protestant Churches in the United States as reported by Church World Service at the close of 1946 represents a total of some \$70,000,000, of which at least \$17,000,000 has been designated for overseas use in Europe and Asia by way of Church World Service as a common agency, through which the Churches can present a united Christian witness to the millions in distress.

In addition to the cash contributions reported, the American Churches have, during 1946, raised more than 10,000,000 pounds of contributed goods, food, clothing, seeds, animals, etc., to bring material aid. The evaluation of \$4,500,000 is for book purposes. The spiritual evaluation of such contributions is of much greater significance.

As goals for 1947 it is proposed to lift these totals, at least doubling or tripling the value of the material goods so given. The financial slogan is: A million dollars a month.

The current plans of 21 denominations for fund raising are briefly set forth in this annual presentation by C.W.S. Some of these plans look forward to campaigns of several years' duration. In one notable instance, the "Crusade for Christ" of the Methodist Church, the goal of \$25,000,000 has already been over-subscribed. Other Churches are in varying stages of their efforts with commendable progress indicated in all.

Church World Service is itself the merger of three organisations that were quite successfully used in regard of world-wide relief and inter-Church aid during the war, i.e. the Church Committee in Overseas Relief and Reconstruction, the Commission for World Council Service and the Church Committee for Relief in Asia. The total cash disbursements from C.W.S. in 1946 amounted to about \$3,000,000, of which 68% was for European work and 32% for work in Asia. Material aid distributed was evaluated at an additional \$2,500,000, the European countries receiving 82% and the Asiatic countries 18%.

Of the total shipment throughout the world of contributed commodities, the largest consignment has gone to Germany, 22%; while Italy 13%, Greece 12%, Poland 11%, Hungary 10% followed in the order indicated. Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Holland, Luxembourg and Norway are the other European countries that also shared in these distributions. In Asia, China received the largest proportion, 11% of the total, while Korea, the Philippines and Burma received smaller consignments in amount, but in proportion to population and need perhaps equally as generous.

With the cessation of UNRRA activities, C.W.S. is fully conscious of the increasing burdens that will fall upon the Churches. "It is evident from authentic reports from many countries that the need for food will be tragic in the extreme for months to come", is one of the recent pronouncements. C.W.S. on behalf of the cooperating American Churches is therefore making urgent requests of the American government "to enter such arrangements with other countries in supplying their needs for food, as will help to re-establish their independence at the earliest possible moment, stimulate their economic recovery, and strengthen the ties of international friendship in such a way as to undergird world order and peace". At the same time the government is urged to enact legislation that will establish immigration quotas admitting to America reasonable numbers of the displaced persons who are in such deep distress in many lands, and the Churches are requested to lend their cooperation both for the temporary care and the satisfactory resettlement of those who are admitted.

E.P.S. Geneva

CHINA

First Meeting of the National Christian Council

One hundred and thirty delegates from all parts of China gathered in Shanghai from December 3-11, 1946 for the meeting of the National Christian Council of China. This was the first meeting since the war. The N.C.C. of China represents 25 denominations. Among the guests at the meeting were also ^{missionary} ~~conference~~ ^{was the} delegates from Great Britain and the United States. The main theme of the relationship of the Church to the nation, while major emphasis on evangelistic tasks and on cooperation.

Bishop T. Z. Kaung of the Methodist Church in North China characterised the situation in saying that "the field of our work is in territory not yet occupied or not yet liberated". The Churches have been going around outside real Chinese life and have not yet entered it effectively. "How is our Church regarded by those outside? It is a divided Church... Can we have one united Church now?"

The training of future leaders is therefore necessary. "A foreign subsidised Church will never be able to grow and to cope with the problems of today".

Professor J. C. Tu, President of St. John's University in Shanghai remarked: "We find China divided more deeply than ever before... However, the struggle for freedom and democracy is not without hopeful signs. China is no longer anti-Christian, but is finding in the driving force of Christianity the most fruitful source of spiritual power. Meanwhile, the Church itself must continue to set an example of unity, strength, and democracy".

An appeal to Chinese Christians to cooperate in China's moral and physical rehabilitation was made in a statement adopted by the conference. It expressed gratitude for China's deliverance from oppression, but said that Christians have a responsibility now to withstand "lowered moral standards, corruption, and lawlessness". As followers of Christ "we must summon the nation and ourselves to repentance, and share in the desire of the Chinese people for a peace that is attainable only by obeying God's will".

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, in a personal message to the conference, expressed his sincere hope that "the Churches will follow the everlasting purpose of Christ - to save men and to save the world - and that they will proclaim the truth, awaken society, revive sinking hearts, and create a dynamic, positive atmosphere upon which the establishment of a new China depends."

The recommendation which dominated the whole meeting of the Council was that the time had come to move forward into a more active, vigorous and concerted movement. It was voted that the Churches and Christian organisations in China undertake together a nation-wide Forward Movement beginning in 1947 and continuing for three years. All members present stood in a solemn act of dedication and prayer as they accepted this great responsibility. A special Forward Movement Committee was appointed. In each area of China Christian leaders are asked to consult together for this purpose, and with the help of the national headquarters of the N.C.C. teams are to be organised to visit different parts of China.

Dr. S. E. Leung, of the Chinese Y.M.C.A., was elected Chairman of the Council. Its honorary General Secretary is Bishop W. J. Chen, of the Methodist Church, assisted by Dr. G. Wu, acting General Secretary. E.P.S. Geneva

LATIN AMERICA

For an Interdenominational Approach

According to Dr. John A. Mackay, President of Princeton Theological Seminary, "the success of the Protestant missionary enterprise in Latin America depends upon an interdenominational approach".

Addressing the first annual meeting of the United Andean Indian Mission held in New York on December 19, 1946, Dr. Kakay, who recently completed an air tour of several South American countries, appealed for an "integrated mission programme in a Christian environment which would combine evangelism with training in agriculture, hygiene, and arts and crafts. Education and evangelism are not enough, he declared, unless they are accompanied by social amelioration."

The United Andean Indian Mission was incorporated a year ago, on an interdenominational basis, under sponsorship of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Board of International Missions of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, the Foreign Missionary Society of the United Brethren in Christ, and the executive committee of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern).

The Mission recently purchased a farm in the Northern part of Ecuador which is currently serving 16,000 Indians within a five-mile radius. The farm will be a centre for medical work, educational activities and religious work with special attention to training Indian church leaders. Plans are under way to extend the work to Peru and Bolivia.

E.P.S.Geneva

HUNGARYPastor Boegner's Visit

Pastor Marc Boegner, President of the Protestant Federation of France, has just paid a visit to the Churches in Hungary. He met the members of the Ecumenical Council of Churches and visited the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. His visit was greatly appreciated by the Protestant Hungarian Churches.

E.P.S.Geneva

HUNGARYMutual Aid Between Protestants and Catholics

The Roman Catholic agency "Actio Catholica" in Budapest is serving hot meals every day to nearly 15,000 persons, through 120 people's kitchens. The food for these kitchens is sent by Roman Catholic relief organisations abroad, especially from America.

At one time this autumn the arrival of the foodstuffs was held up, and "Actio Catholica" was on the point of having to close the kitchens, when the Protestant relief organizations came to its assistance and supplied it with 31,000 kg. of foodstuffs. This fact was announced by Radio-Vatican (December 26, 1946) and is commented upon by the Jesuit periodical "A Sziv" (Budapest), which says:

"The Protestants gave a true example of the Christian spirit ready to help.... Our Protestant brethren have borne witness many times in the past of their heedful and sympathising bearing towards Catholic affairs."

"Actio Catholica", for its part, has handed over 24, 5% of its first food-transport (500,000 kg.) to the Protestants.

E.P.S.Geneva

GERMANYGermany's Place in the World Church

Professor Rudolf Smend, one of the German participants at the Conference of the Church Commission on International Affairs in Cambridge, August 1946, summarises his impressions of that meeting in the "Gottinger Universitats-Zeitung" (December 20, 1946), under the title: "Our Place in the World Church".

"Thanks to the second world war, the World Church has reached a new stage of unity. Between the two world wars it was developing... The tensions of the first world war were not entirely removed. Today the unity of the World Church is a matter of course. The journey to an ecumenical meeting is not a journey abroad, to a foreign country, but a journey to a place where - as a Christian - one feels completely at home. The things which are discussed there are not strange matters, but one's own affairs, with which Germany is especially concerned in the present-day ecumenical movement.

"With regard to the influence of the Churches on the political, social and economic order, and especially on international relations and work for peace, the world seems to be more prepared than formerly to accept the truth, that justice and order can only be restored on moral foundations, and that faith will provide a stronger dynamic for reconstruction than any other. The Churches have survived as a unity and a power, and it is a serious question for secular leaders whether or not they should count on the cooperation of Christian forces at least

as far as numbers and influence are concerned. This brings the Churches up against the temptation of conducting their own form of power-politics. During the discussions serious warnings were repeatedly given against this temptation, and the Christian leaders at any rate are fully aware of it."

"The first demands were made on the Churches themselves and their own attitude, in a definite attitude of repentance, recognising the many failures of the Church in the past". German occupation in the peace work of the World Church encounters three inner obstacles, says Professor Smend. "The first obstacles is the natural mistrust of the conquered. As conquered people the German members of the Stockholm Conference in 1925 were very reserved in their attitude towards the work of the Conference... The present Conference has made so much progress in the direction of deeply-rooted ecumenical solidarity, that we should be failing in our Christian duty, and also making a grave political mistake, if we were to adopt the same attitude as we did at Stockholm.

"The second obstacle is our heavy burden of theology. For far too long Germany theology (especially that of late Lutheranism, which has been so much misunderstood) has refused to cooperate in working out a Christian ethic for public life, on the pretext that the Kingdom of God has nothing to do with the political orders of this world. Through this refusal German theology has left a free field open to all the demons of power-politics, and created the foundations of that unpolitical helplessness and uncritical loyalty of the German people, without which the Third Reich and its uncontested duration would have been unthinkable. This way of thinking has been disproved by events, and the world Church is right in expecting a change in the hitherto typical German way of thinking.

"A third obstacle to our cooperation in the unconstrained and hopeful demands of Christian ethics is to be seen in politics.

World wars are God's questions to the whole world, and not least to the world Church, which has been trying to answer this call since 1919. America has been particularly active since 1940 in endeavouring to find an answer to the questions raised by the war; and we - the German Evangelical Church - have every reason to do the same, for this question is addressed to us also. At any rate it is our immediate business to find out what has been done in the spheres of theological and political study in other countries; it is also unavoidable that we should say what we have to say on a basis of complete equality. The Church Universal is the only place in the world where we Germans are treated with the same respect and receive the same rights as the other members. The times demand, not that we should tell the others that they are on the wrong theological road; but that we should accept the hand held out to us to enter into fraternal cooperation and to give our very best, especially in view of the distress of the fatherland". E.P.S.Geneva

FRANCE

Orthodox Theological Training in Paris

The Russian Orthodox Institute in Paris is arranging its theological training work in four separate courses this year. A fifth supplementary course has recently been added. Of the 18 students taking part in the first course, two are Syrians, 9 Serbs and one Bulgarian. Ten more students are expected. In addition to the instruction contained in the syllabus, the Institute is arranging a refresher-course for clergymen. EPS.Geneva

